

AUG 28 1968

Approved For Release 2001/07/26 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000100350043-9

FOIAb3b

BEN BARKA'S LIFE RECALLED AT TRIAL

Moroccan Said to Have Posed
Threat to Certain Interests

By JOHN L. HESS

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Sept. 27—Accounts of bribes, torture and assassination attempts by the Moroccan secret police were given at kidnappers into a memorial for the Ben Barka trial today.

A procession of prominent French and North African friends of Mehdi Ben Barka transformed the trial of the men charged with being his kidnappers into a memorial service, an indictment of his enemies and a reproach to France for having let them trap him and get away.

For the first time since the kidnapping last Oct. 28, the figure of the victim, now believed to be dead, was brought from the shadows. He was described as an outstanding student of mathematics who turned his back on a promising university career to embrace nationalist politics, who resisted French rule but loved France, who was a leading conciliating force when Morocco became independent and then became an exile, an international leader of the "third world"—and a hunted man.

Mohamed Yazid, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Algerian Parliament and an old schoolmate of Mr. Ben Barka's, said that Mr. Ben Barka had organized the Tri-continental Conference in Havana, which brought together leftist and neutralist leaders from Asia, Africa and Latin America. The conference was held in January, 1966, after Mr. Ben Barka's disappearance.

"Ben Barka died because he threatened certain interests," Mr. Yazid declared. He did not define the interests.

Kidnapping Recalled

Describing Mr. Ben Barka as an admirer of France and her policies on peace and the "third world," Mr. Yazid bitterly recalled to a hushed court the moment when the Moroccan had been stopped by two French detectives on a crowded street. There has been much speculation why Ben Barka quietly accompanied his kidnappers.

"He had to make a political decision in a few seconds," Mr. Yazid said. "The last political judgment of Ben Barka was a judgment of confidence in France."

Other witnesses referred to

attempts on Mr. Ben Barka's life dating from 1958. Mehdi Alaoui, a Moroccan Deputy, said he was in a car with him in 1962 when a secret police vehicle forced them off the road. He said Mr. Ben Barka, although injured, managed to flag down passers-by and the police agents fled.

The following year, Mr. Alaoui continued, the police of Gen. Mohammed Oufkir, now Minister of the Interior, tortured him to force him to tell all he knew of the friends and activities of Mr. Ben Barka, who by then was in exile.

When Mr. Alaoui next met Mr. Ben Barka, in Paris in late June, 1965, "he had the air of a hunted man," the Deputy said.

Two weeks before the kidnapping, Mr. Alaoui testified, he ran into Philippe Bernier, one of the defendants, who told him: "Oufkir offered me first 10 million, then 20 million, then 40 million to organize a trap for Mehdi." The sums, in old francs, were equivalent to \$20,000, \$40,000 and \$80,000.

Bernier Confirms Statement

Bernier confirmed the statement. He has maintained that he turned down offers to betray Ben Barka but was used unwittingly to lure the victim to Paris to discuss a movie project.

There are four other defendants in court, but General Oufkir, believed to have chief responsibility for the kidnapping, has refused to attend. He will be tried in absentia later with six others.

One theory holds that Mr. Ben Barka was done away with because he was about to be reconciled with King Nassar and rightwing Maroccans feared the power the opposition leader would then hold.

Lawyers for the Ben Barka family tried without avail to obtain from Henri Barka Boucoiran, information chief of the national police, details about a meeting of General Oufkir and "French friends" at the Crillon Hotel on the Place de la Concorde April 21, 1965.

A sûreté report written nearly a year later said that the kidnapping plot had been discussed at this meeting. But Mr. Boucoiran was unable to explain how the date and place of the meetings had got into the report. He guessed that the sûreté had read about it in a newspaper.

To repeated questioning why the authorities had not acted promptly after the kidnapping, on the rich materials in the files about Mr. Ben Barka and his enemies, Mr. Boucoiran gave the same answer that had been given by spokesman for the Paris police and the French intelligence services—it was days before the data came to the proper officials. By then it was too late.

CPYRGHT

Approved For Release 2001/07/26 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000100350043-9